

He's Pregnant, Too: Ten ways to help him be the best partner and father possible.

More than ever before, attention is being directed to what fathers-to-be experience while their partners are pregnant. Surprisingly, researchers have found that men may go through symptoms of pregnancy like increased appetite; morning sickness or mood swings; feeling jealous of the attention the partner is receiving; and feeling incapable of contributing to the health of the baby. Although no father-to-be wants to feel any of these things, all of these reactions are normal. Below are some suggestions on how you can help your partner.

■ **Encourage him to come with you to prenatal care appointments**

He may not be able to attend every appointment, but visiting the doctor with you will help the baby seem more real. Share the information you learn if he is unable to attend.

■ **Ask him to help you keep a healthy diet**

Eating well is good for all three of you! He'll play an important role in the baby's health if he can be your "food coach," steering you away from junk food and toward the nutritious diet your whole family should eat.

■ **Take walks together each day**

You'll both benefit from the exercise, as well as make special time for the two of you, away from phones, television, etc. Use the time to talk, not only about the baby, but also about other things that are of special interest to him.

■ **Ask for him to help prepare your home for the baby's arrival**

Get him involved in the "nesting" activities most moms-to-be can't resist. Perhaps, shop together to look at baby clothes and be sure to make him an equal partner in setting aside a special place in your home for your baby.

■ **Be supportive**

Your partner is likely to wonder if he'll be the parent that he wants to be. Let him know you understand these feelings and offer him your support.

■ **Set reasonable expectations**

There may be a lot of ways your partner can be supportive of what you're going through, such as being a birthing coach or being a part of the delivery. Encourage your partner to be involved in the pregnancy as much as possible.

■ **Encourage him to attend parenting classes and read or watch a video tape about parenting and child care**

The more he knows, the better. If he's never taken care of a newborn, he may feel scared that he'll accidentally hurt the baby or do something wrong. He'll be better prepared to be a parent if he takes the time to learn what to expect.

■ **Help him make changes in his lifestyle**

If your partner is concerned that some of his behaviors, such as smoking, stand in the way of being a good partner or parent, support those changes. Encourage him to seek counseling or join a support group to practice behaviors that are healthier for the entire family.

■ **Talk openly about finances**

Work together to set and stick to a budget, even before the baby is born. Try and borrow as much baby gear from friends and family as possible. In addition to its other benefits, breastfeeding is a natural way to save money, too. If your partner knows you're working together to keep expenses under control and save for the future, he'll be less worried.

■ **Reassure him that changes in lifestyle are positive**

Your partner may be worried about changes in lifestyle when the baby arrives. Let him know that doing more family-oriented things will be just as fun and satisfying. Rather than focusing on what you won't be able to do, talk with your partner about all the new things you will do, like special family outings and getting together with other families.

The most important thing you can do is let your partner know that you're going through the pregnancy together. During the pregnancy, you'll be doing most of the work, but don't assume that your partner doesn't already share the joys and worries that are normal for any parent-to-be. Try to talk as openly about your fears as you do about your excitement about the pregnancy. Encourage him to do the same.

Source: mama, Your Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy,
March of Dimes, 1998



BabyCal
1-800-BABY-999

Important phone numbers that can provide you with more prenatal care information, support and referrals.

March of Dimes	1-888-MODIMES (National Resource Center)
Southern California Chapter	1-213-637-5050
Northern California Chapter	1-916-922-1913

Or consult your local telephone directory for a chapter near you.